13: Routledge E-5 (1914-1915) 1917
OY2 Easter Islanders OY2



listening for the birds"; here men kept watch day and night for news from the islet below.

The privilege of obtaining the first egg was a matter of competition between members of the Mata-toa, but the right to be one of the competitors was secured only by supernatural means. An "iviatua," a divinely-gifted individual, dreamed that a certain man was favoured by the gods, so that if he entered for the race he would be a winner, or, in technical parlance, become a bird-man or "tangata manu"; it was also ordained that he should then take a new name, which formed part of the revelation, and this bird-name was given to the year in which victory was achieved, thus forming an easily remembered system of chronology. The nomination might be taken up at once or not for many years; and if not used by the original nominee it might descend to his son or grandson; one case was mentioned where a young man who was victorious passed on the honours to an older relative. If a man did not win he might try again or "say that the iviatua was a liar" and retire from the contest. Women were never nominated, but the iviatua might be male or female and, needless to say, was rewarded with presents of food. There were four gods, or "atua," connected with the eggs—Hawa-tuu-take-take, called "chief of the eggs," and Make-make, who were male deities; also Vie Hoa, the wife of Hawa, and Vie Kenatea, who were females; each of these four had a servant whose names were given and who were also supernatural beings. Two iviatua "called themselves after Hawa and Make-make" respectively, but this seems to have been exceptional. Those going to take the eggs recited the names of the gods before meat, inviting them to partake. The actual competitors were men of importance and spent their time with the rest of the Ao at the village of Orongo; they selected servants to represent them and await the coming of the birds in less comfortable quarters in the islet below.